



Questionnaire for Harris County Democratic Party Chair Candidates

Please answer the following questions and return to info@harrisdemocrats.com by **Monday, 03/06 at 6 PM.**

1. What do you see as the main function of the chair and of the party? How are they different?

My main job as Chair of HCDP is to ensure that we have the funding; staff; and volunteers (including Precinct Chairs) in place to increase Democratic voter turnout in Harris County to the levels necessary to change statewide races. Harris County is the keystone to state level Democratic victories up and down the ballot, which will directly lead to national impacts as well. If entrusted with the position of Chair, I will make increasing Democratic turnout in Harris County my #1 priority.

The Democratic Party is not the Chair. Instead the Party speaks to the need for every member of society, not just the favored few, to benefit from these impacts. At the end of the day, the Democratic Party fights consistently for worker rights, diversity, broadening economic and educational opportunities for all, and respect for each member of our community no matter race, color, creed, or sexual orientation. Putting the Democratic label by your name on the ballot tells me that you recognize these same priorities.

2. How much of your time do you plan on dedicating to the party each week?

Whatever is needed to ensure that the HCDP is moving forward. As Managing Partner of Doyle Dennis LLP, I am blessed with a great team of lawyers and other professionals able to support me in whatever time is needed to work as County Chair.

3. Do you believe the party should be doing year round organizing? If so, what should that look like?

Yes. I have previously outlined specific Guiding Principles for going forward (listed below). A key to HCDP's success is to view Voter Protection, Education

and Engagement as a Year-Round activity, not something that we think about only at election time:

1. **Start on Day One building a Coordinated Campaign** infrastructure that will turn-out 1.1+ million Democratic votes in Harris County in 2024. This is critical to protect all our Democratic elected officials, but particularly our county-wide elected Judges and multi-county Appellate Court Justices.
2. **Make Voter Protection, Education, and Engagement a Priority Year-Round** –Only by embedding voter protection, education, and engagement into all our information, tools, and processes can we overcome the obstacles Republicans are erecting to prevent Democrats from voting.
3. **Prioritize the work of Precinct Chairs**, by providing resources, information, and tools to support the critical work of organizing in our communities.
4. **Expand the Data Management team** and ensure Democratic Clubs & Organizations and Precinct Chairs have access to VAN and other data tools to support their work and broaden their impact.
5. **Prioritize our Democratic Clubs and Organizations** by providing resources and a full-time staff member to support and grow their critical work.
6. **Amplify and protect the work of Democratic elected officials –especially our Judges and other elected officials.** Our Democratic officeholders are doing great work every day, and the Party needs to be **consistently** telling their stories loudly and clearly. We need to act NOW to defend our Democratic officials and Judges from a repeat of the threats, lies, and negative attacks they endured during the 2022 campaign.
7. **Prioritize fundraising** by engaging Sustaining Members, traditional donors, and digital donors to fully fund and sustain the work of the Party.

4. Do you believe the party should have an office? If so, why and where?

Yes. Having had the opportunity to preview the current financials, I believe it is premature to promise any particular financial commitment until we have a chance to fully identify our current position (including areas for increasing funding). We need an office, and likely multiple locations given the size and diversity of Harris County, to engage with our volunteers and community. Given the financial and lease situation facing HCDP right now, we need to have a search committee made up of Precinct Chairs and Senate District Chairs, including someone(s) with real estate expertise, to determine whether and in what locations we can maintain an office or offices, including our current location on Lyons.

5. What are the different functions of the SC, SD Chairs and CIA?

The Steering Committee (SC) serves as an Advisory Committee to the County Chair, and acts on behalf of the Harris County Democratic Executive Committee in between meetings of the Harris County Democratic Executive Committee as necessary to approve expenditures, adopt resolutions on behalf of the HCDP (subject to being rescinded at the next CEC meeting on the Committee), among other duties.

SD Chairs preside over the Senate Districts that include Harris County within a Senate District, and are responsible for conducting regular meetings of the Senate District and assisting Precinct Chairs in their SD.

Clubs in Action is a voluntary organization made up of a number of Harris County Democratic Club that engaged in direct action by coordination of those Clubs in the field and through their messaging during the 2022 election cycle.

6. How familiar are you with Roberts Rules of Order?

I am well versed in Roberts Rules of Order, having ran meetings utilizing the Rules with hundreds of attendees, as well as regular Board meetings with the Harris County Democratic Lawyers Association, Houston Trial Lawyers Association, and other community boards where I have served.

7. What is the difference between a precinct chair and an election judge?

A precinct chair is responsible for the Party's ground game in each precinct, identifying with, connecting with, and assisting Democratic voters to show up to vote. An election judge, who may be but is not required to be a Precinct Chair, runs the polling place (with the same authority as a District Judge) on election day.

8. How do you plan on recruiting precinct chairs? And election judges?

In addition to the Executive Director, I believe we can and should fund a full-time recruiter whose job is to recruit and onboard vacant precinct chair and volunteer positions, so these ongoing gaps are finally filled. These efforts can and should support efforts already being made by SD Chairs and Vacancy Chairs, not replace them.

9. What do you see as the role of the party during the primary?

With the contracted assistance of the Harris County Elections Administrator, run a safe, efficient, and fair primary election.

10. What do you believe the annual budget of the party should be? What should be the main line items?

Having had the opportunity to preview the current financials, I believe it is premature to promise any particular financial commitment in the short term until we have a chance to fully identify our current position (including areas for increasing funding and meeting our current obligations). Under the rules of the Harris County Democratic Party, the Chair is required to submit a budget for approval by May 20th to the Finance Committee and ultimately the Steering Committee and the CEC. My first order of business as Party Chair will be to begin the important work of resolving our financial position and developing a budget that will allow us to move forward with the critical work of the Party.

That said, to increase funding, there are three promising paths in addition to the JRR and necessary Spring fundraising event with larger revenue impacts:

- Sustaining members have dropped by roughly 25% over the last several years, and bringing back those that dropped and bringing in new members simply must happen.
- Traditional donors (including many local trial lawyers who give significantly more nationally than in Harris County) need to be re-engaged as well; and
- Crowdsourcing looks promising. In this program, Donors in safe “blue” states were offered the chance to “adopt” a block walk or similar effort, turning up new dollars with minimal transaction costs.

11. How do you plan on raising \$1 million a year?

We must raise more than \$1 million per year—the Harris County Republican Party just exceeded that number at their annual dinner last week.

Since 2007, I have organized efforts that raised at least \$100,000 per year for Democratic candidates up and down the ballot, and I have had extensive experience developing the trust and relationships to bring in financial supports.

I have organized and hosted dozens of fundraisers since 1998 for Democratic candidates, including events for Balance PAC (created to support judicial candidates in 2010 by primarily targeting large corporate firms that traditionally only supported Republican candidates). I have served in leadership, including currently President, with the Harris County Democratic Lawyers Association (www.hcdla.com) since 2015, having joined when it was first organized. During my service as President, the membership has more than doubled. While President of the Houston Trial Lawyers Association (www.htla.org) in 2007, we also founded the 7th Amendment PAC of HTLA, which has supported coordinated campaign, voter turnout, and other critical work for the Party.

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- Traditional donors (including many local trial lawyers who give significantly more nationally than in Harris County) need to be re-engaged as well; and
- Crowd-sourcing used by Clubs in Action looks promising. Donors in safe “blue” states were offered the chance to “adopt” a block walk or similar effort, turning up new dollars with minimal transaction costs.

12. What is the total number of Democrats that you think we can turnout to vote in 2024? How do you plan to achieve this goal?

We should turn out at least 1,100,000 Democrats to vote in 2024. That can only happen if we start in April 2024 with the planning of the coordinated campaign, as well as the funding and messaging to support those efforts. We need fully operational coordinated campaign structure that includes a robust voter registration effort. Simply put we must start our coordinated campaign this year, we can't afford to wait until 2024 to start this work.

13. What is your vision for realigning the county party's organizational structure?

We need to start with an experienced Executive Director able to analyze the data to identify where our Democratic voters are within the county, ensuring that data drives our decisions as we increase support to our Precinct Chairs and Clubs. As outlined above, we also need a full-time volunteer recruiter (both for Precinct Chairs and other volunteer efforts, as well as a staffer directly responsible for implementing a messaging plan developed with input from various members of our Harris County community to reach all parts of the community.

14. What are your thoughts on a dedicated in-house data team for ongoing analysis regarding voter registration and outreach?

We need to start with an experienced Executive Director able to analyze the data to identify where our Democratic voters are within the county, ensuring that data drives our decisions as we increase support to our Precinct Chairs and Clubs. At the end of the day, the goal of the data team is to ensure our voters turn out consistently in **every** election cycle, driven by planned efforts across the diverse spectrum of our County.

It is also critical that we put the data in the hands of our Precinct Chairs. They know their communities best and we need to support their efforts. We have Precinct Chairs and other volunteers already conducting very helpful analysis, and we need to take advantage of those available resources as we build a data team to successfully increase our reach into communities and neighborhoods across the County.

15. In the last election, some would say we lacked a coordinated message in the county. There is a perception that the different clubs and organizations, Clubs in Action and precinct chairs lacked message coordination. What is your plan to have a multi-level (i.e., neighborhoods/interest groups/precinct chairs) communication strategy? What staffing resources do you see needed to proactively develop and rollout messaging?

As Democrats we have a great story to tell. We require at least one staffer, and hopefully as our current budgeting issues are addressed, more paid staff, directly responsible for implementing a messaging plan developed with input from various members of our Harris County community to reach all parts of the community. Each of our various communities needs to hear a message about the respect, opportunity, and welcoming HCDP and how are Democratic leadership in the County is supporting their values and improving their quality of life.

16. HCDP has a chronic high level of vacant precinct chairs. The historic model of relying on SD vacancy chairs to source new chairs works in some Senatorial districts, but not in others. What's your plan to attack this problem and do you believe recruitment should be centralized at HCDP for those Senatorial Districts with vacancy levels above a certain threshold?

In addition to the Executive Director, I believe we can and should fund a full-time recruiter for vacant precinct chair and volunteer positions, so these ongoing gaps are finally filled. As I referenced above, the efforts of this staff position can and should support efforts already being made by SD Chairs and Vacancy Chairs, not replace them.

17. HCDP approved about \$10,000 in printing in support of initiatives developed by the Precinct Chair Support Committee. The party has never provided this level of focused precinct chair level support. How do you intend to increase the level of support to chairs and will you make the PCSC a Standing Committee with a dedicated budget?

Yes I will make the PCSC a standing committee with a dedicated budget. I believe that the existing Precinct Chair Support Committee work has developed

many of the tools that if implemented consistently and across the County can properly support Precinct Chairs. HCDP should take on the task of selecting, printing, and sharing resources on a cost-effective basis, including online and digital resources. As we solve our budgetary challenges and grow our fundraising efforts, we should bring together a Committee of Precinct Chairs, Senate District Chairs, and Clubs and Organization leaders to examine the issue of direct reimbursement of activities and develop policies to guide this program

18. The HCDP Chair is a very time intensive job, how will you balance the demands of your legal profession with the demands of the party chair position? Will you be able to devote yourself to it full time during election season?

As I referenced above, I am committed to spending all the time needed to ensure that the HCDP is moving forward. As Managing Partner of Doyle Dennis LLP, I am blessed with a great team of lawyers and other professionals able to support me in whatever time is needed to work as County Chair.

19. Texas and Harris County have continued to lose a % of Hispanic voters the last 2 election cycles. What do you propose to stop this and increase our share of the Hispanic vote?

Unfortunately, we have lost voters in many communities, including the Hispanic community, which includes voters from many different backgrounds and experiences across the globe, not just Latin America.

The ability to find and support qualified persons from diverse backgrounds to build organizations that work effectively, is a consistent theme in my community service for decades. We need to ask the Hispanic community for support by directly and continuously engaging the community, including its elected and non-elected leaders, what drives voter participation and support for Democratic principles that daily benefit our Latino citizens. Our Spanish language messaging has been anemic, at best, and given HCDP's available resources there is no excuse for not messaging as consistently and well to Spanish-speaking voters.

20. Harris County has in the neighborhood of 25 college and high school level Democratic clubs that are tapped into sufficiently. This seems to be a huge missed opportunity to grow the Party's younger support and solve many precinct chair vacancies. How will you devote resources to addressing our huge missed opportunity in engaging younger voters?

This is a huge, missed opportunity, and our existing efforts have barely scratched the surface. As we begin building our coordinated campaign infrastructure this year, we must ensure we have Young Dems at the table informing our strategy and our work.

These cannot be symbolic seats at the table, but instead we must recognize the very real number of voters these groups can bring to the Party and provide the engagement and resources to support their work.

21. Many groups complain of the Democratic Party only showing up at election time when they need their vote. What are your ideas to be present other than at election time?

Our outreach efforts must start in April 2023, not April 2024. We have committed and talented Precinct Chairs and Clubs looking for active engagement with their local communities, and we need to support these efforts consistently with tools, information, training, and resources.

22. The Party has made efforts to train precinct chairs, but because of staffing, training has been inconsistent. How do you plan to onboard new precinct chairs and mentor those chairs who need further training?

In addition to recruiting Precinct Chairs, the staff member focused on this activity should also be responsible for initial on-boarding of new Precinct Chairs. We should also expand the work of the existing Precinct Chair Support Committee to include training and mentoring activities to support new Precinct Chairs. Precinct Chairs are the backbone of the Harris County Democratic Party. My administration will have a laser focus on recruiting, engaging, and supporting both new and existing Chairs.

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